



Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey Results 1998



The 1998 Department of Revenue Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey was administered by Washington State University's Social and Economic Research Center. The survey was sent to a representative sample of 3,200 businesses and achieved a 50 percent response rate.

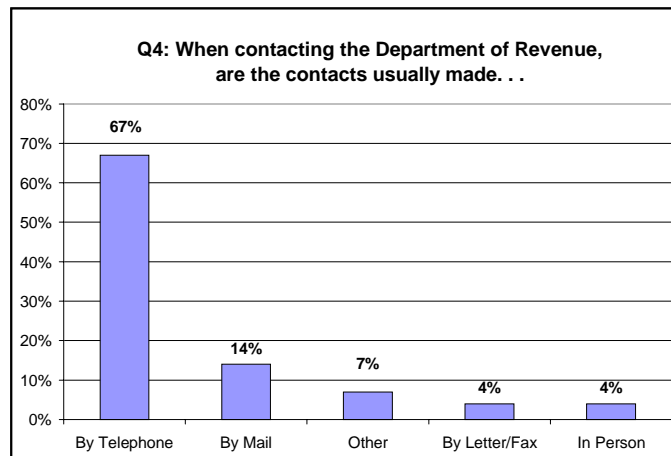
As in the 1992 and 1995 surveys, questions focused on the degree to which taxpayers are satisfied with our services, information, publications, and employee responsiveness. It asked about the number and types of contacts businesses had with the Department, the degree to which businesses were satisfied with the services and information provided, and their opinions on several other issues.

In addition, responses to the 1998 survey will enable the Department to identify and measure the impact of changes made after the 1992 and 1995 surveys.

Following are highlights from the results of the 1998 Washington State Department of Revenue Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey:

How and why do businesses contact the agency?

In both the 1995 and 1998 surveys, the majority of respondents indicated that they usually contact the Department by telephone. Specifically, in the 1998 survey, more than two-thirds of businesses (67%) indicated that they usually contact the Department by phone.



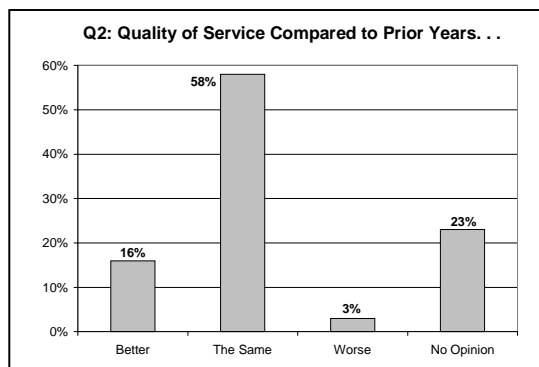
After the 1995 survey was conducted, the Department examined the level of service taxpayers were receiving when they called the Telephone Information Center. It found that callers were being forced to wait on hold for long periods and developed the goal of answering 70 percent of calls within 2 minutes or less. To achieve its goal, the Department automated several of its phone services, moved the public records database to the Internet, and added three additional staff to answer taxpayer questions. Currently, the Telephone Information Center is exceeding its goal and answering 74 percent of calls within 2 minutes or less.

When asked in the 1998 survey how long of a wait was acceptable when calling the Telephone Information Center, 70 percent of customers indicated less than 2 minutes was acceptable. This feedback validates the Department's current performance measure.

While the reasons businesses contact the Department vary considerably, the responses remained fairly consistent from the 1995 to 1998 surveys. Nearly six out of ten (59%) indicated they contacted the Department for general business tax information, 44 percent for assistance in completing tax forms, and 33 percent for a taxpayer account change or registration.

How is the Department of Revenue's quality of service?

When asked how they would compare the quality of service received from the Department in 1997 with the quality of service received in previous years, 16 percent of customers said the service was better, up from 13 percent in 1995. In comparing these responses to the reasons customers contact the Department, it is clear that the quality of service has improved in all areas.



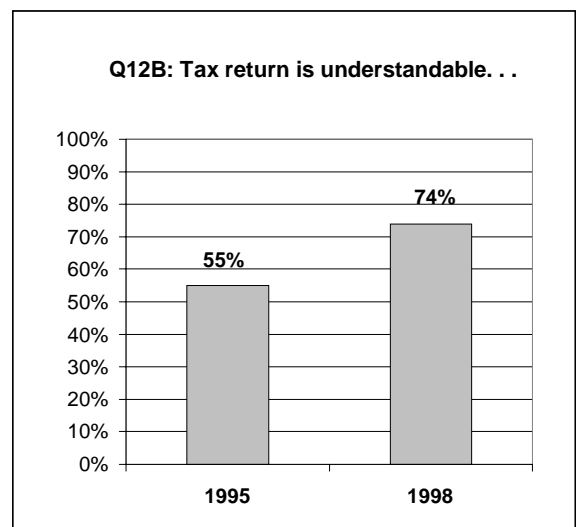
Customers who visited a field office in 1997 agreed that they received assistance quickly (84%), were able to get help resolving their specific tax questions (84%), received accurate information (81%), received complete information (77%), and were treated courteously and helpfully by staff (86%).

What enforcement activities are important to taxpayers?

The survey asked customers which of three enforcement functions provided by the Department they felt was most important. 18 percent said pursuing unlicensed businesses was most important, 9 percent said pursuing unpaid taxes on out-of-state vehicles, 8 percent said the collection process for delinquent accounts, and 66 percent said all functions are equally important.

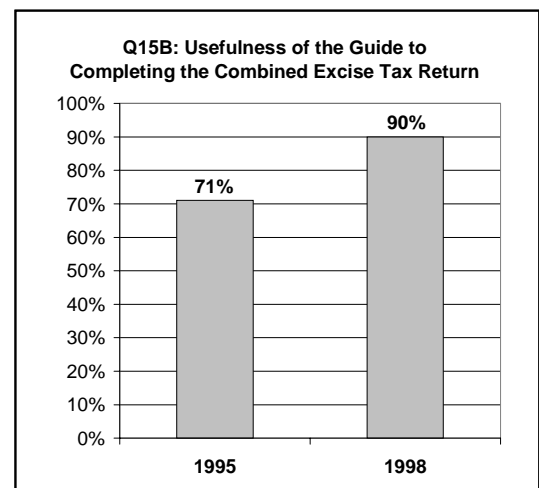
How do you feel about the Combined Excise Tax Return (CETR)?

Customers who agree that the tax return is understandable increased from 55 percent in 1995 to 74 percent in 1998.



The number of customers that felt the Department was prompt in notifying taxpayers of tax return errors also increased from 35 percent in 1995 to 55 percent in 1998.

The survey asked customers what they found most useful in assisting with the preparation of their CETR. They found the *Guide to Completing the Combined Excise Tax Return* most useful, increasing significantly from 71 percent in 1995 to 90 percent in 1998. Last period's return was also very useful (89%), as well as the local sales and use tax flyer (80%).



Q15: What do you find the most useful in assisting with the preparation of your return?

Guide to Completing Tax Return 90%
 Last Period's Return..... 89%
 Local Sales/Use Tax Flyer..... 80%

More than half of respondents (51%) indicated that changes in Washington's tax structure and deductions, exemptions, and credits were somewhat or very

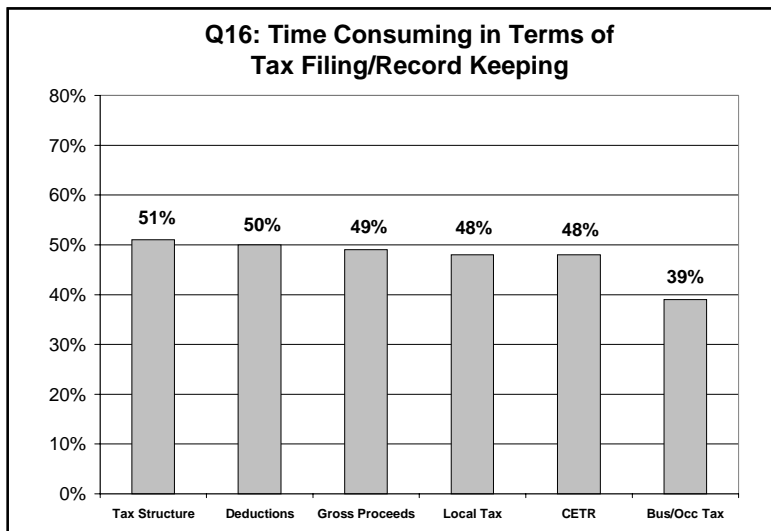
time-consuming. However, only 39 percent found business and occupation tax time-consuming.

Does the information Revenue provides help taxpayers meet their reporting requirements?

The survey asked respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with statements about tax forms, rules, and reporting to the Department of Revenue. Respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that:

- Forms and instructions are easy to understand (71%);
- Information provided by the Department is sufficient to properly report taxes (76%);
- Department forms and information are distributed in a timely fashion (87%);
- Changes in tax laws and rules are communicated timely (75%);
- Department administrative rules are easy to understand (48%); and
- Local tax coding requirements are easy to understand (56%).

The survey also asked respondents how time-consuming various aspects of the tax filing and record keeping process are to them.



A message from the Director

When I joined the Department of Revenue as Director in 1997, I saw an agency that was committed to providing quality service to its customers. As Director, I took that commitment a step further and incorporated the idea of taxpayer-centrism into our cultural mission statement.

Today, I believe all Revenue employees embrace this goal and continuously work to improve the level of service we provide taxpayers.

I am pleased with the results of the 1998 Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey. It is clear that Revenue

employees are working hard to meet the goals we have set forth as an agency.

While the results show customer service is improving, there is still the challenge of moving the agency forward to the next level of service. I am confident our commitment to continuous improvement will take us there.

If you would like additional information on the survey results, please contact Taxpayer Services' Assistant Director Vikki Riffe at (360) 753-7780.